

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 OMB-01 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 545

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR TH BM

SUBJECT: BURMA ARMY SHELLING OF THAI VILLAGE

REF: (A) BANGKOK 6551 (B) BANGKOK 6091

1. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF MAR 28 THAT "REPRESENTATIONS"-- AND HE STRESSED THAT THEY WERE NOT A PROTEST NOTE--HAD BEEN MADE TO GUB RE SHELLING OF BAN WANG KHA (REF A). SOURCE NOTED THAT REPORTS OF INCIDENT WERE STILL PRELIMINARY. IT WAS NOT KNOWN, FOR INSTANCE, WHETHER OTHER SHELLS HIT THE BURMESE SIDE OF THE BORDER AND JUST A FEW WENT ASTRAY OR WHETHER THE HOWITZERS WERE AIMED AT THAILAND. THAI HAD ALSO ASKED THAT SHELLING OF THE AREA BE STOPPED BY THE GUB. MAR 28 BANGKOK WORLD CARRIED ARTICLE STATING THAT SHELLING OF BURMESE SIDE OF BORDER HAD RESUMED, BUT MFA SOURCE WAS UNABLE TO CONFIRM OR DENY STORY.

2. BURMESE EMBASSY OFFICIAL DURING MAR 28 CONVERSATION ON SAME SUBJECT TOLD EMBOFF THAT THAI REPRESENTATIONS HAD BEEN MADE IN RANGOON. HE SAID THAI HAD ASKED FOR COMPENSATION FOR LIVES AND DAMAGES, AND HAD REQUESTED THAT SHELLING

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CEASE. NOTING THAT THE VILLAGE ON THE BURMESE SIDE OF THE BORDER WAS ALSO KNOWN AS WANG KHA, HE WONDERED HOW MANY OF THOSE KILLED HAD BEEN THAI AND HOW MANY KAREN. HE THEN SOMEWHAT INGENUOUSLY BUT APPARENTLY SINCERELY ASKED EMBOFF WHETHER THE THAI WERE REALLY UPSET ABOUT THE INCIDENT. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT THAI OFFICIALS HAD APPEARED THUS FAR TO BE RESTRAINED IN THEIR REATIONS, BUT UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES

IT WOULD BE HARD TO PRESUME THEY WOULDN'T BE SOMEWHAT UPSET.

3. EMBOFF MENTIONED THAT VISIT BY FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT TO RANGOON IN JANUARY HAD APPARENTLY BEEN THAI ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. "YES, TO PATCH UP THINGS," INTERJECTED BURMESE EMBOFF. EMBOFF WENT ON TO ASK WHETHER BURMESE EMBOFF THOUGHT ANTI-NARCOTICS COOPERATION BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA WOULD BE POSSIBLE, AS WAS MENTIONED IN PRESS REPORTS OF THE BURMESE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER THANIN (REF B). BURMESE EMBOFF SAID THAT THANIN HAD BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT DURING AN INFORMAL LUNCHEON ON QMR 17 WITH THE BURMESE AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND. BURMESE EMBOFF STATED THAT NARCOTICS ERADICATION WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO THE GUB, AND HE THOUGHT THAT SOME SORT OF COOPERATIVE EFFORTS COULD BE WORKED OUT. PROBLEM WAS, OF COURSE, THAT MANY OF THE AREAS WHERE OPIUM GROWING AND TRAFFICKING TOOK PLACE WERE "NOT VERY SAFE FOR BURMESE".

4. COMMENT: NUMBERS KILLED AND WOUNDED AT BAN WANG KHA ARE STILL UNCERTAIN. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AT FIRST REPORTED BETWEEN 25 AND 50 KILLED, BUT FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT STATED TO PRESS ON MAR 27 THAT 14 HAD DIED. MFA SOURCE (MENTIONED PARA 1) TOLD EMBOFF THAT IT WILL BE SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE WHOLE STORY IS KNOWN. MEANWHILE, BANGKOK ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY NATION REVIEW REPORTED MAR 28 THAT PRESIDENT NE WIN HAD EXPRESSED "GRAVE CONCERN" OVER THE INCIDENT. ACTUAL COMPENSATION FORMALLY REQUESTED BY THE THAI MAY, HOWEVER, MEET WITH SAME SOMEWHAT SCEPTICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ATTITUDE AS EXPRESSED BY BURMESE EMBOFF.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

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